



**Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth  
Bureau of Construction Codes  
P.O. Box 30254  
Lansing, Michigan 48909  
(517) 241-9302**

## **Bureau of Construction Codes Technical Bulletin**

Publication Number 24

Updated: July 2006

# **Requirements for Plumbing Fixtures in Remote Cabins**

***“Providing for Michigan’s Safety in the Built Environment”***

Technical bulletins are issued to provide clarification on issues that arise regarding code administration and enforcement. The information provided in the bulletin is developed to promote uniform interpretation and enforcement of the state codes.

DLEG is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids, services and other reasonable accommodations are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

## **REQUIREMENTS FOR PLUMBING FIXTURES IN REMOTE CABINS**

### **Issue**

Several inquiries have been received by the Bureau of Construction Codes relating to required plumbing fixtures and hot and cold water distribution systems in buildings of Use Group R-3, single family residential dwellings where electricity may not be available.

This technical bulletin discusses the conditions that represent an exceptional, practical difficulty and what actions are required to assure the proper health, safety, and welfare for citizens faced with these situations.

### **Law**

#### **The Stille-DeRossett-Hale Single State Construction Code Act, Act 230 of PA 1972**

Section 4 provides authority for the department to prepare and promulgate state construction codes, which includes adoption of nationally recognized model codes with applicable Michigan Amendments.

#### **The Michigan State Plumbing Law, Act 733 of 2002**

Section 9b defines “Plumbing” as meaning “the practice, materials, and fixtures, in or adjacent to a building, structure, or premises, used in the installation, maintenance, extension, or alteration of all piping, fixtures, plumbing appliances, plumbing appurtenances, as defined by the code, in connection with the sanitary drainage or storm drainage facilities, plumbing venting systems, medical gas systems, backflow preventers, and public or private water supply systems.”

### **Code**

#### **Michigan Residential Code**

The 2003 Michigan Residential Code sets forth the plumbing requirements in one- and two-family dwellings.

Section R101.3 Purpose. The purpose of this code is to provide minimum requirements to safeguard the public safety, health and general welfare, through affordability, structural strength, means of egress facilities, stability, sanitation, light and ventilation, energy conservation and safety to life and property from fire and other hazards attributed to the built environment.

Section R306 Sanitation requires the following:

R306.1 Toilet facilities. Every dwelling unit shall be provided with a water closet, lavatory, and a bathtub or shower.

R306.2 Kitchen. Each dwelling unit shall be provided with a kitchen area and every kitchen area shall be provided with a sink.

R306.3 Sewage disposal. All plumbing fixtures shall be connected to a sanitary sewer or to an approved private sewage disposal system.

R306.4 Water supply to fixtures. All plumbing fixtures shall be connected to an approved water supply. Kitchen sinks, lavatories, bathtubs, showers, bidets, laundry tubs and washing machine outlets shall be provided with hot and cold water.

### **Discussion**

Private water or private sewage disposal systems are beyond the scope of the plumbing code in this state. County health departments have jurisdiction in this area.

In remote areas where electricity is not available, the county health department has allowed outside privies to be constructed over an approved vault, by permit issuance. A well permit may or may not have been issued by the county health department in those cases. However, when the well permit is issued, it is to be used with a hand pump application only. The hand pump location is required to be outside the structure.

When electricity is provided at a later date, the owner is required to contact the health department for appropriate sewage and well compliance permits. A cooperative effort shall be established between the sanitarian, building, and plumbing enforcement agency requiring conformance to present codes.

### **Conclusion**

The Michigan State Plumbing Board has received numerous variance requests for structures located in remote areas where electricity is not available to support a water distribution system. The county health departments, in those cases, have allowed outdoor privies with or without wells having a hand pump.

Structure owners electing to install any plumbing fixtures for convenience shall obtain permits, inspections, and comply with the code. For example, hand-filling water into kitchen sinks and water closets would require approved fixtures and methods of connections, i.e., disposal.

Rather than conducting variance hearings for each specific site, the State Plumbing Board has established criteria to ensure code compliance in recognition of practical considerations.

Required plumbing fixtures and hot and cold water distribution systems in remote R-3 structures where electricity is not available will not be mandated provided all of the following conditions are satisfied:

- a. An electrical power source is not readily available. A readily available power source would include a portable power generator on site, or power along the road frontage of the site.
- b. A sewage disposal system permit shall have been issued by the county health department having jurisdiction for an outside privy over an approved vault.
- c. A water supply well permit, including the use of a hand pump only, issued from the county health department having jurisdiction.
- d. The use of the structure shall be limited to family members only.

Deviation from the above listed conditions shall invalidate this code appeal.

The plumbing official shall obtain written information from the owner verifying the conditions, establish tracking procedures for each structure, and inspect the installation of any fixtures installed for convenience purposes.

Questions regarding this technical bulletin may be directed to the Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth, Bureau of Construction Codes, Plumbing Division, P.O. Box 30254, Lansing, MI 48909 or by calling (517) 241-9330.